

Administrative Operations and Facilities

PARK ADMINISTRATION

Background

Furnace Creek/Cow Creek

Furnace Creek serves as the main administrative headquarters for the Park and has a visitor center and an administrative office. These buildings were built in the late 1950s and are not large enough for all central office staff. As a result, the maintenance, resource protection, and visitor use staff are located at Cow Creek, 3 miles north of headquarters. The original adobe buildings at Cow Creek, built during the CCC era, include the old administrative building and several maintenance buildings. These buildings have gained historic status. The Furnace Creek, Cow Creek area functions as a small town with an airstrip, gas station, store, school, emergency fire, police, medical, and maintenance services. Park management is reviewing possible office space outside the Park.

Scotty's Castle

Scotty's Castle is located 55 miles north of headquarters. NPS employees work in a modular building located on the upper edge of the grounds. The building was brought in after a fire destroyed a historic building that had served as office space. Other buildings are now used for storing various materials.

Maintenance Facilities

More than 70% of the maintenance staff are now located at Cow Creek and 23% are at Scotty's Castle. One maintenance worker and three rangers are located at Stovepipe Wells. Rangers at Wildrose also assist in light maintenance of the three adjacent campgrounds. The maintenance division is responsible for over 50 buildings, 9 campgrounds, 243 miles of standard vehicle paved road, 442 miles of high clearance or 4x4 and 10 miles of service road, 60

houses and 8 water systems. Travel distances and extreme heat are two major obstacles in performing daily operations. Because Death Valley is now the largest national park in the contiguous United States, there are some limitations on how much the Park can accomplish under the current conditions. Maintenance and other Park staff need three hours to travel from Grapevine to Eureka Dunes and an additional two to three hours to drive from there to the Saline Valley Warm Springs.

The Cow Creek maintenance facility takes care of most visitor and administrative facilities because of its nearness to Furnace Creek and other intense visitor and administrative use zones. Several buildings including the auto shop are contained inside historic structures with adobe walls, which limits renovations and expansions. At this time, there is no adequate space or facilities for the maintenance operation, and employees are looking to expand onto the abandoned Salt Pan housing area or the current storage yard to the east. California Department of Transportation also has a maintenance yard just south of the main NPS yard.

The maintenance operation at Scotty's Castle maintains the historic structures and grounds, which require special attention. They are also responsible for employee housing at Grapevine, the campground at Mesquite Spring, and facilities at Eureka Dunes.

Plan Actions

The Park will make an effort to replace nonnative plants and landscapes with native plants and landscapes around administrative and visitor facilities where appropriate for interpretive, aesthetic, water conservation and other management purposes. Efforts will be made to reduce the number of exotic plants such as athel tamarisk, oleander, and palms.



EMPLOYEE HOUSING

Background

The majority of the staff live at the Cow Creek housing area which has 60 housing units and 37 transient trailer/RV sites. Stovepipe Wells has seven units and six transient trailer/RV sites; Wildrose has three units; Grapevine has 16 units and two transient trailer sites; and Scotty's Castle has five units. Nine additional units are occupied by Caltrans, State Highway Patrol and Natural History Association employees. Grapevine has a severe shortage of housing, which has resulted in employees living at Cow Creek and commuting to Scotty's Castle, over a 60-minute commute. A housing development plan for Grapevine has been initiated by Park staff. Currently, the Park has 22 employment opportunities but no Park housing available. The contractor-conducted housing assessment completed in 1998 concluded that there was a need for an additional 19 housing units to meet current staffing needs. Park management believes there is a need for 76 additional units.

Park management is encouraging certain employees to seek housing outside the Park. Alternate work schedules have been initiated and telecommuting is being considered.

Plan Actions

The development concept plan underway for the Grapevine area will recommend providing housing and replacing the existing trailers for the northern district of the Park. Ongoing trailer replacement with permanent houses will continue.

Permanently placed trailers will never again be allowed at any NPS housing facility where they currently do not exist. Once the trailers at Grapevine are replaced, this policy will be extended to that location. Transient trailers and RVs are allowed in designated NPS areas, but not permanently placed trailers.

Prior to constructing additional housing for employees, the Park will evaluate the location of the housing and make a determination about whether private housing elsewhere within a one hour drive could serve the same need, and whether the total housing units are the minimum necessary to meet the mission of the Park.

SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL

The Park landfill near Furnace Creek has been closed to further use and current law and regulations prohibit landfills in parks. Solid waste disposal will continue to be hauled to approved landfills outside the Park.

